THE TRUE

NARRATIVE

OF THE

CONFESSION

AND

EXECUTION

Of *Francis Nicholson*

Who was Executed this present *Wednesday*, being the 27th of this instant *October*, 1680. And Hang'd up in Chains

AT

Hownslow-Heath,

For Murthering of one

John Dimbleby

AT

HAMPTON-COURT

This being his own true Confession both to the *Ordinary* of *Newgate*, and several other Ministers and others who came to him whilst he continued in Prison, and have hereunto subscribed their Names to attest the Truth of this Relation.

MY Father was a Malster in *Lancashire* who lived in good reputation, my Mother is now a Widow, that liveth in credit and is well beloved, and they gave me good Education, but I was a disobedient and unruly Son to a loving and tender Mother. I never heard of any of my Kindred that was guilty of Theft Murder, or any such horrid Crimes before my self, for which I have justly brought this death upon me, nor did I ever hear of any of my Relations that were ever cast into any Goal or Prison before.

My neglect of duty to my Mother, cauſed me to fall into the acquaintance of ill company of other lude fellows in whom I took too much delight, and the more ſleighted the care and counſel of my Mother.

By frequenting ſuch bad company I fell with them to drinking, and to ſpend my time and money vainly at the Alehouſe; though my Mother and Friends ſought to draw me from it, for the bad acquaintance I had prevailed more with me.

And then we fell to breaking the Sabbath day, by our meeting at the Alehouſe, and other bad places, when we ſhould have been at Church ſerving God, to the grief of my tender Mother.

And by theſe evil doings I got ſo bad an habit, that I grew careleſs how to put my ſelf into any way to live in any good courſe of Life.

And being thus unſetled in my mind I did conſent to a young man of my unhappy acquaintance to joyn with him in ſtealing of an Horſe, for us to ride to *London* and ſeek for ſome imployment there.

I had very little money to carry me up, and was too ſtubborn to ſeek to my Mother: but helping a Drover whom I overtook with Beaſts, I had Diet and Lodging in my journey till I came to *London* with him.

But I had money and neceſſaries ſent after me, by my Mother to *London*, of which I was very glad for I knew not what courſe to take

And then I put my ſelf Apprentice to a Carpenter a very honeſt good man, who was a loving Maſter to me; and gave me good edueation, and was a loving Maſter to me and to whom *I* was much obliged for his care of me, and well pleaſed with his Service.

And though he had divers pieces of Plate about the houſe, and other good Goods yet *I* did never wrong him of any thing by any Theft or Pilfering.

But *I* robbed both God and my Maſter of too much time with naughty company that *I* found out, in drinking, and merry meeting, and lewdneſs, and ſin.

And *I* did greatly profane the Sabbath day by neglecting the Church, and meeting with my acquaintance, walking about and ſitting in an Alehouſe, and a very bad life, ſo that *I* have ſome times thus ſpent the whole Sabbath day, from nine a clock in the morning until midnight, and then have come home drunk.

And in all this I was not ſenſible of my miſerable condition, by thus provoking God by my Sins, in which it was Gods mercy to ſpare me, and give me time to repent had I had grace to have improved it.

But that which is moſt dreadful upon my Conſcience is, this bloody Fact for which I am to die, which lieth as a very ſore and heavy burden upon my Soul; and for which I can give no reaſon why I did it, but the inſtigation of the Devil tempting to it when I was drunk, and not having the fear of God before mine Eyes, and my Senſes gone with drink, I was thus overcome of Satan, and took up my Hatchet, and (oh my Soul bleeds to think of it) I murdered that man that never did me injury.

I was there at work for my Maſter, and had opportunity (being from home) to ſpend my time more ill; and not having God in my thoughts, I lived profane and lewdly.

But this *I* can ſay (*I* thank God) *I* never did commit Whoredom with any Woman; but ill company, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenneſs, diſobedience to Parents, profaneſs, and other Sins *I* have been deeply guilty of. The Lord be merciful to me, and pardon and forgive me for the ſake of my dear Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

When I had committed this horrid Murder for which I am to die, there was another young man that was ſuſpected to have done it, and was apprehended upon that ſuſpition.

But when upon further inquiry *I* was found out (by a Watch *I* took out of his Pocket) to be the man that did it; *I* was apprehended, and confeſſed that it was *I* that murdered him.

Then *I* was asked if the other young man in cuſtody upon ſuſpition, did not joyn with me, or hire me, or ſet me on do it, and whether he had not ſome hand with me in it.

To which I (like a wicked Wretch) affirmed that he hired me, and promiſed to give me forty ſhillings, and a better thing; and ſo he came to be indicted with me, and put in danger of his Life.

But this wrong that I did to him hath much troubled me, and I thank God that the Jury did acquit him: And though he was acquitted, yet I could not be quiet in my mind till I ſent for him, and I thank him that he came to me, and when he came to me, I heartily asked him forgiveneſs, and he hath as freely forgiven me.

Since

Since I have been condemned to die, I have been much troubled in Conscience for all my sinful and naughty Life, especially for this bloody and wicked murder, which is a very great terror to me, fearing lest God will not pardon so vile a Sin, yet not despairing, so that I have been greatly dejected; and my Soul dead, stupified, under the terror and wrath of God, not knowing what to do.

But since the help I have had from the Ordinary, and other godly Ministers, who have conferred with me, and prayed with me, and for me. and instructed me out of Gods word, both together with other condemned Prisoners, and privately with my self, (the Lord requite them for their great pains) I have found some hopes of mercy from God through Christ Jesus my Saviour, who died for me, which I prize more than my life. I am very sensible of Gods mercies to me, a wicked wretch that deserve not what I have already received, though like a wicked unthankful creature I have not improved but abused them heretofore, but do now in deep sense of them, magnifie Gods goodness therein. I confess it is a great mercy from God to me (praised be his holy Name) that my life hath not been cut off in the midst of the very act of Sins, and been cast into Hell torments for ever, but that God spared me and gave me time to repent; and offered me the blessed means and helps that I have found here in Prison. I confess it is Gods great mercy to me (by means of those worthy Ministers that have visited me) to assist, teach, counsel, and comfort me in the way of peace, and reconciliation with God through Christ; in which I have found a great change in me and hope of mercy. I confess that it is a great mercy and favour to me to move the heart of the Recorder and others that have given me so long time of repentance, after the sentence of Death passed upom me, before my Execution too, methinks I find my heart dayly more and more humbled, my sorrow for my Sins to encrease, and my hopes of mercy and pardon of my sins, and of the salvation of my Soul move more lively in me. And I thank the Lord that by his providence and grace, he hath under this sad dispensation of Death, brought my mind into a willing and hearty submission to his Will.

I am not troubled that I must die in submission to Gods providence, I do not much desire to live any longer, only to settle my peace with God, hoping when I die, through Gods mercy to enjoy Life Eternal through Jesus Christ my Saviour. It is not Life in this World, nor any thing of this Life that I wraftle with God for; I thank God I hang loose to all Worldly things. But it is the mercy of God to my Soul, and the blood of Christ to wash away my sins, and to save my Soul that I labour for, peace of Conscience and Eternal Life that I earnestly seek for. Oh my sins, my Sins, these are my sorrows, therefore I beg unto God day and night in the dark Dungeon where I lie in Fetters of Iron, what ever the Lord doth with me in this Life and what ever I suffer, that my sins may be pardoned and that my poor sinful soul may be saved, and I do hope to find mercy from God, who hath promised mercy to those that confess their sins and repent and call upon him, and though my sins are very great, yet my comfort is that his mercies abound more and are greater than my sins, and the mercies of God towards me and his great working upon me since I have been condemned, makes me also to hope that the Lord intends in mercy to save me though I have been so great a sinner. I do spend my time in my dismal Dungeon I thank God in much prayer in which I find great Comfort from God to my Soul, and sequestring my thoughts from the things of this world that I may more comfortably injoy God. I desire all young men to take warning by me, that you may not bring the wrath of God upon you in the like Judgment that I am under, or some other as dreadful or more bitter. Had I been Dutiful to my Parents I had not needed to have taken such desperate Courses as I have done. Had I kept the Sabbath holy I had not fallen in such lewd profane company as have brought me to this miserable end. Had I not been drunk I had not committed this horrid Murder. And had I refrained ill company I had not lain under so great temptations to Sin. Had I had grace and wisdom I might have lived as comfortably and as happily as others of my degree. Had I been dutiful to a careful Mother, or obedient to a good Master, I had not come to this sad end, but might have lived to have seen happy days. I pray God I may be a warning to all Children to teach them duty to their Parents, to all Apprentices to teach them to mind first their duty to God, and then the Business they are intrusted by their Masters. And to all young Men to take heed of ill Company, such as delight to Sin: To all Sabbath-breakers to amend and turn to God, lest he leave them to Satan and they fall into some dreadful Sin. And to all Drunkards, whose sin therein maketh them Slaves to Satan to commit any desperate wickedness that he tempts them to.

This is truly my Confession, witness my Hand *Francis Nicholfson.*

Witness *H. Walker*, Minister. *Richard Paxton*, *Richard Hawker*, Officers.

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The Confession of *Francis Nicholson* to Mr. *Samuel Smith*, Ordinary of *Newgate*, in relation to his Murthering of *John Dimblehy*.

Francis Nicholson declared voluntarily, and at several times to me Mr. *Samuel Smith* Ordinary of *Newgate*, and to divers other persons then present, that he the said *Nicholson* was not hired by the Person Arraigned with him, to commit the said Murther, as he persisted to affirm at his Trial, but the said Asseveration was his meer contrivance, to lessen his own Crime, And farther did Relate, that he had never thought of the Coachman, had not the man at the *Toy* at *Hampton-Court* asked him the question when he was before the Justice, whether or no the Coachman was not concerned with him. saying surely some body must set him on to do it, and thinking thereby to clear himself, was the only reason of his charging of the Coachman with that bloody Act. Whereupon I *Samuel Smith* told him that he ought to send for the Person he had so wronged and to beg his Pardon, which since he hath done.

After the Discovery of such a false Aspersion, I ask'd the said *Nicholson*, what moved him to murther the person, he said that having drank hard one Night in Company, he wisht that God would damn him if he did not try to kill a Man, and affirmed from that very time, for a fortnight together, the Devil did so haunt him, that he had no rest in his mind, by the Tempters urging him to make good his Vow, for otherwise he would be certainly Damned. He said that it was indifferent to him whom he killed, so he killed some Body to ease his mind. That he watcht an opportunity to kill the person at *Hampton-Court* but his heart failed him several times, yet being left to himself, by God for his wicked imprecation or wish, he was so hurried on by the Devil to effect that Murther, that he could not withstand it for he declared to me several times that it neither proceeded from any Grudg or Malice, nor hope of Gain, yet after he had killed the Man, he searcht his Pockets and took out a Watch; also he said to me that this troubles his Conscience very much, that he killed the Man on a sudden, and so dying without preparation, he knows not in what state or Condition his Soul is in.

Ita Testor, *Samuel Smith*

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